

墨宝非宝 作品

神之左手



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lang="en">

# God's Left Hand - Volume 01 Chapter 01-19

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# Chapter 1

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 1

Alright guys, here are with Book 1 of God's Left Hand! Also I've been talking with Hsi and we might start posting 2 chapters a week, one on every Saturday like usual and once on Monday. We'll make an announcement on the blog on when we plan to start.

Enjoy!

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Sunshine came into the library through the glass.

Bright and clear.

Ai Qing, with her chin resting on her palms, looked at the book titled “Origin of the Color of Gemstones”. There were two other books next to her, “Gemstone Appraisal” and “Instruments for Appraising Gemstones”. The girls next to her looked at these books curiously, then looked at her and exchanged few words in a low voice.

Ai Qing sighed quietly.

She wouldn't have chosen jewelry appraisal as her major if she had known better.

Because it was such an unpopular major on campus, something considered rare and exotic. Almost no one knew that this university had a serious bachelor of arts degree in jewelry appraisal.

Those girls, after their mutters, began to talk about various activities at school. Finally, their focus turned to a certain DotA league. It seemed that there's a corporation organizing a Chinese DotA league. In order to promote it commercially, all the tournaments were held on various college campuses. And the tournament in this city was being held on the fifth floor of the school library.

At three o'clock this afternoon.

It was said that there were going to be 26 teams from different colleges of the city.

It was said that there were many handsome guys there.

It was said that the winning team could go on to national finals.

"Small instruments for the discrimination of colors are, spectrometers, dichroic beam splitter, color filter, UV lamp....." Ai Qing deliberately read aloud to hint to the girls that their gossiping was bothering others..... but they continued unabated. Finally, she had collected her books and quietly left her seat.

On her way downstairs, she happened to run into the contestants for the game going upstairs.

They wore different colored uniforms and backpacks, all boys except a few rare women team captains.

She held her books and finally passed through all these people. Suddenly, someone called out "Gou Gou". Ai Qing unconsciously turned her head and saw a face with a big smile and huge surprise. "It's really

you, Gou Gou.”

Ai Qing grinned. “Call me Ai Qing.”

“Ai Qing.” That shy Mian Bao before was now more than a head taller than her, he’d totally grown up. “I’m here for the tournament. Are you here to watch the matches?”

“I’m a student here.” Ai Qing raised the books in her hands. “Jewelry Appraisal.”

“Jewelry Appraisal.....is it fun?”

“It’s a niche market,” Ai Qing told him mysteriously. “There are only 800 registered jewelry appraisers in the country so far.”

She succeeded in fooling Mian Bao. After showing a stunned expression, he commented that it was no wonder she would give up video game competitions since she had found such great profession.

Ai Qing smiled and didn’t respond.

Because of the enthusiastic invitation from this old acquaintance, Ai Qing sat at the last row of the venue and watched a whole afternoon full of video game matches. More and more commercial sponsorship and more and more college level leagues. It’s just like what they said in the opening statement of this tournament: nowadays, video game competitions were no longer just a sport, but a commercial event.



# Chapter 2

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 2

One weekend afternoon, Ai Qing's roommate spilled a glass of water onto her new laptop while animatedly telling a joke.

Ai Qing was forced to accompany her to the computer city for repair.

Since it was the weekend, the computer city in downtown was very crowded.

Her roommate had a poor sense of directions; they walked through the whole third floor but still couldn't find the shop where she had bought the computer.

"I only remember that the owner was very handsome, with short black hair and his eyes were always smiling....." The roommate kept talking about the features of the owner. Ai Qing didn't know whether to cry or laugh. "Did you buy this computer just because of his face?"

"Certainly not." The roommate said with a guilty conscience. "I just admire him. When I was there, he and some other handsome guys were looking at a computer. That computer was super good looking and had a logo that I don't even recognize.....it's a strange alien head. They kept talking about computer accessories. If you'd seen it, it would have made your blood boil." Her roommate got more excited as she spoke. "Actually, I thought about it later, it was just a laptop. But the way they talked about it, it sounded like a sports car.....I was thinking about joining in the fun, but it's too expensive; it's worth several tens of thousands, so I gave up."

Ai Qing finally understood what she was talking about at this point. "Alienware."

“Un?” The roommate didn’t get it.

“The laptop you were talking about is from `Alienware`.” Ai Qing smiling comforted her. “For your usual needs for watching movies or novels, you don’t need that kind of high end laptop. That’s specially for playing games.”

“Yeah, that handsome guy also said so.” The roommate looked like she had finally found her soul mate. “It was the first time that I found the boys were so chic when they were talking about games. Usually, I would just think that they’re just bums.”

Ai Qing responded with an “un”. “Actually, if it’s real professional game players, they’re usually even more pickier about the accessories, there are even specially designated brands for mouse pads.”

“Ai Qing.” The roommate looked at her excitedly. “He said exactly the same thing.”

Ai Qing didn’t continue and pointed at her laptop. “So, what are you going to tell him? Usually, the seller isn’t responsible for this kind of damage by accidentally spilling water.”

“I don’t know.....” Her roommate looked at the laptop in her arms with a pained expression.

Ai Qing was about to say something, suddenly, she saw someone at a store looked very, very familiar.

When that person turned around, Ai Qing realized that she was correct. Both of them were stunned. He was the first to recover his senses and smiled.

“Ai Qing, that’s the guy.” The roommate exhaled a long breath. “We finally found it.”

Ai Qing acknowledged with an “un”.

She looked at the person who was five or six steps away.

He was smiling and then extinguished the cigarette. He didn’t speak to Ai Qing at first and instead asked her roommate, “something wrong with the

computer?”

She hurriedly moved forwards and started to confess what she had done.

In the end, because of Ai Qing, Slide didn't say anything and opened up the computer to carefully check it, inside and out. Fortunately, there was a keyboard film covering it, there wasn't too much of damage. Ai Qing sat in his shop and watched him fix the laptop while chatting with her roommate, her eyes were fixed on his left hand and couldn't move away.

Her roommate only found out Ai Qing had some unusual relationship with him after the computer was fixed. She immediately got the hint and said that she wanted to go shopping, leaving the computer and Ai Qing in the shop. It was lunch time, Slide took up his phone and asked her, “I can't leave, how about I order some take out and you can eat with me at the shop?”

Ai Qing nodded smiling.

He quickly made the call and ordered two gan chao niu he (乾炒牛河, TL: fried rice noodles with beef).

After he hung up, Ai Qing walked over and glanced at his hand. “What happened to your hand?”

# Chapter 3

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 3

Sorry guys, I accidentally set it to publish at 11pm rather than 11am. My bad...

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Though it was such a hot day one of his hands was covered by a black glove.

The glove was very thin, showing off five slender fingers. For those who didn't know him, they would think that he was just wearing it to look cool.

But for someone who was supposed to be a professional player in Germany, selling computers in a computer city downtown.....he wouldn't be wearing the glove for such a silly reason.

Slide stroke her hair with a smile. "Do you want to be Zhen Zi (贞子, TL: Sadako, from Ring, the horror movie/book) Your hair has grown this long." He gestured with his hand. "It's reached down to your thighs. Isn't it bothersome? Won't it take half an hour to wash it?"

"40 minutes." Seeing that he wasn't answering her question, Ai Qing stopped poking at his sore spot. "I don't need to train ten some hours a day now, I have more than enough time to do unimportant things."

He couldn't help laughing.

Three years.

It seemed to have changed a lot of things.

Her roommate didn't come back from her shopping after the two had finished their lunches.

Ai Qing chatted with Slide idly; their conversations were all on superficial, trivial gossips of daily life, which didn't involve anything related to video game competitions.

In between, there were customers who came by to purchase computer accessories or to fix their computers.

People who liked video game competitions are more than likely fans of computer hardware. Due to Slide's past experiences, he understood well the needs of video gamers and most of the customers were enthusiasts of various video games.

Some were very polite and some were obnoxious.

Slide greeted everyone with smiles until there came three tall young men later.

One of them was holding the "Alien" which her roommate so envied.

"Boss, this computer is no good." The one who's holding the computer said with a false smile. "My younger brother came here yesterday and bought this computer. It's totally no good. You even lied to the kid that this is a special computer for games?"

Ai Qing intuitively thought that this person had specially come looking for trouble.

Sure enough, after Slide said a few words patiently, the other two who had come with the man started to mock and ridicule Slide. Saying that this was tricking the kids, how could this computer play any games, that it was just rubbish.

In the end, there were more and more onlookers. Those three began attacking the store, questioned the quality of all the products sold in the store.....Ai Qing couldn't stand it and finally said, "Alienware is the top notch computer for games. A lot of professional video game contestants use it. You can go online to check it; it had even sponsored World Tournaments before."

The three men looked at her. The one who started the complaint smiled suddenly. "Little sister, this is a computer worth twenty to thirty thousand RMB. It won't do just to go online to check. We certainly know about this computer, but it is just hard to use. Or, maybe it was good to use, but after it was `processed` by the store, it has become harder to use."

Ai Qing carefully glanced at him. "When buying a computer, it's very common to have some hardware problems. But what you refer to as `hard to use`, is there any definition for it? If it is just a problem with your own personal sense of touch, there's no need to bother other people's normal business."

The man smiled hypocritically. "You play games, little sister? A kart racing game? Audition Online?"

Ai Qing was starting to get angry with "little sister" being said over and over.

Slide deliberately took a look at her and hinted to stop before she was in an unfavorable situation.

Ever since she knew Slide, he always had smiles on his face, friendly and happily towards anyone. But, no matter what, he was once a person highly worshiped by many esports fans. Looking at his face, Ai Qing suddenly felt very sorry for him.

Some people's pretension are offensive, but some people.....if their pride was bent, it would only make others feel heartbroken for them.

She stood up from her chair, walked to the counter at the front of the store. "Does it matter which game you play?"

"It certainly matters." The man, with both hands propped up on the counter, came closer and laughed. "As you just said, this computer is a high end one and used at many tournaments. My younger brother is going to use it to play in the national tournament."

"So, you feel that this one isn't qualified for it?"

"It's just like you said the feel of the keys isn't good." The man casually hit a few keys with his index finger. "To a professional player, the feel of the keyboard is very important."

"What if your brother's skill level just isn't good enough yet?" Ai Qing looked him calmly. "Maybe some other person feels that this computer is very good to use and it's just that your brother's skill level isn't good enough to use a high end computer?"

"His team was number 10 nationally last year. They played hundreds of games to reach the final. What do you think about that, little sister?" The man turned his head and pointed at the man next to him who had dyed his hair yellow. "He and my brother are in the same team. My brother doesn't have time today, he specially comes with me to return the computer. Ask him if you don't believe me."

"What do you play?" Ai Qing looked at this man.

“CS.” The yellow hair man had a very stern look in his eyes.

Very harshly.....

Ai Qing took a look at Slide and took down a string from her wrist to tie back her hair.

“How about this.” She smiled politely. “We have lots of computers here. We can network and try it. If we can use this computer to play a game without any problems, then there is no need to return it.”



# Chapter 4

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 4

Hey guys! So we've gotten faster at this whole translation thing, so we'll be posting more God's Left Hand every Monday.

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The three men didn't expect such a challenge from the girl.

The yellow hair looked at Ai Qing with great amusement. "You mean a round of Kart Racing?"

"CS." Ai Qing thought for a bit. "2 wins out of three rounds."

She hadn't touched the game for more than two years. Usually when she was bored, she would play VOS to pass time, a game where one would tap keys on keyboard as piano keys.....so, she felt much more comfortable if it was a best of three games.

"Your girlfriend is pretty funny." The yellow haired guy looked at Slide. "Two on two?"

Slides smilingly took out another computer, the exact same model, from under the counter. "No, one on one. I am basically what you would call an armchair strategist. I never play any games."

"Then if we win?"

"If you win, I'll let you return the computer."

Slide connected the two computers to the router with a cable. Ai Qing sat besides him and said in a low voice, “Don’t expect too much from me, I haven’t touched CS for two years.”

Slide didn’t even raise his head, as he tapped the keyboard to set up the attributes and properties. “I don’t expect you to win all three. That guy is also selling computers and has a store on the second floor. Mine and his customers are mostly people who like to play games. Just now, when I saw his face, I was already prepared to take the computer back. So no pressure.”

“Vicious competition?” Ai Qing, holding her chin, watched him open CS and test the controls. “Well then don’t blame me if I lose.”

Slide grinned and pushed over one of the computers. “Doesn’t matter. If you lose, I’ll give that returned computer to you.”

Ai Qing snorted with laughter and kicked him. “Such a big incentive. Watch out, I might just lose on purpose.”

Slide raised his eyebrows slightly and looked at her with a faint smile.

How could a person who loved to compete so much be so easily defeated.

While they were doing the preparations, some old customers came by. They were all excited by what they were seeing.

Especially the fact that one of the contestants was a young lady with long hair, that made it even more interesting.

Quite a few people recognized the yellow hair guy and were discussing in a low voices that he was a member of the most popular team this year. The yellow hair was icy from the beginning and acted as if he didn’t hear a thing. But, when Slide pushed a computer to him, he suddenly said to Ai Qing, “How about this, I’ll take a handicap. I will just use the sniper rifle.”

In CS, each player can only carry a big gun.

The submachine gun has a magazine capacity of 30 bullets, the sniper rifle has a short delay before being able to fire the next bullet. Therefore, except for professional snipers, no one would choose to use this gun.

Ai Qing used to be a sniper.

“Ok.” Ai Qing accepted the challenge, but not the handicap. “I will use the sniper rifle, too. How about this way, for the three rounds: knife, assault rifle<sup>[1]</sup>, and long gun. For the long gun, we will use a sniper rifle. The time for each round is one minute.”

The yellow hair was stunned after hearing what she just said. “Have you been playing this?”

Ai Qing shook her head. “Haven’t played it for a long time.”

The two sat across from each other at a small round table. Slide stood next to Ai Qing’s side, while watching her open the game, and suddenly lowered his head and touched the cigarette in his pocket.....Ai Qing turned and glanced at him like she had sensed something.

Slide smiled embarrassingly.

Her emotions that had just calmed down was stirred up completely.

But the game had to go on. Ai Qing turned her head back, took a deep breath, and nodded to the yellow hair.

She unexpectedly lost the first round.

Ai Qing regretfully glanced at Slide and her left hand was unconsciously trying to familiarize herself with the keyboard.

She hadn’t touched it for a long, long time.

She didn't think she would lost the first round.

A knife battle was her area expertise, but just now, she was killed by the opponent's knife the instant she met face to face with him. She reckoned that if Solo and the others had seen this, they would had laughingly scold her for being a good for nothing.

Her eyes were suddenly covered by a warm touch and turned into dark.

Slide covered her eyes and said, "Get familiar with the feeling."

Ai Qing smiled and stroked the surface of the keyboard, trying to quiet herself down.

Solo did the same in the past. Whenever she was impetuously impatient, he would cover her eyes with his hands, to let her casually gain control over her keyboard, while he explained the map to her with a low voice. In the darkness he would always tell her where she was on the map and the areas enemies would normally come out.....

Ai Qing pulled down Slide's hands. "I'm good."

[1]: We're not sure if it's actually an assault rifle, as the weapon was censored in the original text. We checked several sites, but couldn't figure it out. Sniper rifle was also originally censored, but we could see the original wordings in other sites. Anyhow it's probably an assault rifle or something.

# Chapter 5

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 5

If yellow hair's victory in the first round could be considered a narrow win.

Then the next two rounds were one person's exhibition shows of Ai Qing. After a series of flashes and the smoke cleared, her opponent didn't even have a chance to fight back. One headshot with one bullet, a clean kill.

The assault rifle and long gun rounds ended in one minute.

Pop music was playing inside the building. The air conditioning wasn't working properly, so when Ai Qing released her mouse, her palm was somewhat sweaty.

She began to subconsciously tap the keyboard with her left fingers while she was lost in her thoughts. She closed the game and pointed to the computer in front of her. "It looks like this laptop doesn't have any problem."

Yellow hair didn't make a sound, it looked like he didn't plan to say anything.

"You are welcome to come anytime if there's a problem later on." Ai Qing closed the laptop, unplugged it, and handed it over to the person who had been on purposely looking for trouble. "The feel of this laptop's keyboard is quite good. Or at the very least, I've never used anything better than this."

After she finished, the onlookers there all came closer, curious to examine it themselves.

They murmured to each other in agreement. "What an awesome computer." "What a really high end computer."

The person took the laptop, not knowing what to say, and left.

Ai Qing finally exhaled a long breath. "That was scary. It's true that if you don't play it for a while, your skill degrades quite a bit."

Slide squinted his eyes and sighed, "Did you have a sudden feeling of nostalgia back there?"

"Yeah." Ai Qing took out water from the small refrigerator next to the counter and took a sip. "I just remembered that I was pretty lucky to have gotten an upgrade when we flew back home that year. That was the first time I flew business class. Really miss that. I haven't had much luck in these two years."

Actually, what she missed more was those days on the road.

She missed the excited fans who came to meet her after she walked off the airplane.

She missed the moments when she adjusted her equipments before each match.

She missed the courages they showed when they raised their name tags in protest.

She even missed some of the trashy hotels she had to stay in while competing.

What she missed the most was the wild celebration after each game whether they lost or won.....

Ai Qing looked at him and said in a melancholic voice, "Sometimes, I feel like I was living in a dream before. I didn't have any pressure from daily life. Suddenly, I walked out of it and couldn't get use to real society."

"You'd be at the top of your professional career at your current age." Slide suddenly asked her, "Why didn't you continue?"

"Let's make a pact." Ai Qing twisted the cap back on. "Let's not ask

each other this question.”

“I like to gossip.” Slide kept smiling until it began to make her uneasy. Then he asked in a low voice, “I remembered that year you were upgraded with that young genius.”

Ai Qing glanced at him.

As she was about to say something, her roommate happened to come back. Her roommate threw herself in front of Ai Qing and asked her with winking eyes, “Can we go now? Should I go back to school first?”

Ai Qing stuffed the computer into her arms and said to Slide, “I just took your cell phone and dialed my own number. These two weeks I have exams, I’ll come look for you after my exams.”

On the way back, her roommate kept asking Ai Qing how she knew the handsome store owner. Was there an affair going on? Ai Qing just said that he used to be her neighbor. She leaned against the door of the subway and watched absent mindedly as billboards passed by one after another.

She clearly remembered that morning, when they arrived at the airport to check in, she and Dt were the last two to hand over their passports. They were lucky enough to be upgraded to business class. During the five hour flight, she did not talk too much with Dt. She habitually suffered from motion sickness; whenever she was on any form of transportation, she would be in a deep slumber the whole time.....it was Dt who woke her up when it was time to land.

He then handed over a cup of apple juice to her.

“Thanks.” She took it, cleared her throat, and asked him, “Where are you transferring to after landing?”

“Guangzhou.”

She answered with an “En”. “Hope there’s a chance to see you again in the future.”

What she really wanted to say was that she hoped he would continue to walk down the path of a professional gamer.

“For sure.” He answered very positively at that time.

She even remembered his dark black eyes under the shadow casted by the rim of his cap.

Unfortunately, he didn't keep his word.



# Chapter 6

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 6

After two weeks full of exams, Ai Qing's junior year was finally done.

For her senior year, almost all of her classmates were going to intern at jewelry companies or places like the Bureau of Geology. Since she had no preference, her father had arranged for her to intern at a local jewelry appraisal studio.

In short, she would be looking at a bunch of gold, platinum, agate, and diamond every day.

As her older sister, Ai Jing, had said, she would soon live a life that was even more luxurious than that of a rich lady.

She and her older sister were twins, but they were totally different.

Her sister liked to study; she had a guaranteed admission into the doctoral program of the Chinese Language Department at the end of her junior year. The only thing that could count as a similar interest between the two was that her sister liked cos<sup>[1]</sup>, going to all the manga conventions. She especially liked to cos popular male characters.....

More than once she was misidentified when she accompanied her sister to manga conventions.

Fortunately, when she was at video game competitions, her sister wasn't a public figure yet, otherwise, who knew what kind of funny thing would happen.

This summer, the manga convention was at Guangzhou.

Her sister had been saving money a long time since it was announced; she insisted on bringing Ai Qing along.

“This time I will be cos a character from the video game Warcraft.” Her sister handed over their ID cards to receive their boarding passes. “So, my Apple Dog has to come with me.”

The airline staff was surprised to hear that and glanced at her sister. “If you want to check in a dog, you will need to get a health certificate first.”

.....

She embarrassingly looked at the staff. “We don’t have a dog to check in, just these two luggages.”

“The manga convention has an esports exhibition, will there be someone you know?” Her sister tilted her head and thought for a while. “Too bad that you retired. The videos from those years are gone too. When they invited me to this convention, I especially asked them whether they knew Apple Dog and they all said no.”

Ai Qing gave her a look like she had gone through a lot. “See those diving athletes, who still remembers their names except the two diving queens who married into rich families?”

Ai Jing patted her forehead sadly. “Doesn’t matter. I remember you.”

When they arrived at the Baiyun Airport, there were even fans of her sister there to meet them.

While her sister was animatedly chatting with her fans, she was quietly followed at the side until one of the fans pointed in a direction. “That one is here for the exhibition. What a coincidence, he came in on the same flight

as you.”

Her sister looked over out of curiosity and she also took a look.

There was a young man in the crowd who wore rimless glasses, a backpack, and was pulling a huge luggage.

If he took off the glasses, he would probably be mistaken for a girl.

“He’s a Starcraft II player.” Obviously, this fan of her sister was also an esports fan. “Didn’t Solo change his event a couple years ago? Now these two are the top ranking players in Starcraft II in China. We always felt that he and Solo would make such a good pair~”

.....A fujoshi’s<sup>[2]</sup> strength was truly powerful.

Her sister answered with an “oh~” and looked at Ai Qing deliberately. “Speaking of Solo, I knew his ex-girlfriend.”

The younger girls shouted “ah! ah! ah! ah!” and jumped up and down around her sister. “Really? Is she good looking? We’ve seen the picture of Solo’s daughter, she’s so beautiful. They said that he had his daughter with one of his fans when he’s 18.....is it that person?”

“No.” Her sister purposely said very, very slowly, “his ex-girlfriend looks very much like me... very similar.”

Ai Qing pretended that she did not hear it. Out of professional habit, she was interested in that person. “What’s his name?”

Esport competitions had experienced a surge of popularity in the past two years. She did not expect to see so many strange faces so quickly.

“Grunt.” Someone replied.

At the same time, the person in question seemed to sense that he was being watched and glanced over this way, then all of a sudden his eyes stopped on the two sisters. He looked back and forth between Ai Jing and Ai Qing, as if he knew one of them.

He had a very attentive look.

“Who’s Grunt looking at?” The younger girls asked her sister surprisingly.

Her sister looked at her puzzled.

“Looking at her.” She pointed at her sister and said whatever came to her mind, “he has been secretly admiring my sister.”

Whole bunch of young girls were stunned, so was her sister.

Grunt in the distance obviously did not know that a misunderstanding had just been created. He finally looked the other way and walked out of the airport.

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[1]: This is written in the raws as “cos” in English, which is basically a shorthand for cosplay. If you don’t know what it is, it’s essentially people who dress up in costumes based on game, manga, and anime characters and attend game/comic/anime conventions.

[2]: So for those who don’t understand the word “fujoshi,” it basically means yaoi fangirls (though not all yaoi fans are female). If you don’t know what “yaoi” means it’s another Japanese word that means “Boy’s love” or basically male-male romance that usually gets pretty graphic, probably... More here if you are interested: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yaoi\\_fandom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yaoi_fandom)

Anyhow the raw used the Chinese form: 腐女 which in pinyin is: “fǔnǚ.” We thought that fujoshi is more commonly known and would be an appropriate English translation.

# Chapter 7

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 7

The manga convention was a three-day event.

“This is a manga convention. I know you would be more excited if it was a video game convention. The video game convention two years ago had more than 700 cosplayers there, all cosplaying as video game characters.” Her sister sat and rested off the stage. “Too bad you were in the hospital at the time. Otherwise, if you were there, you would have been thrilled.”

Ai Qing wore a simple white short sleeve, faded jeans, sitting next to her sister who wore heavy costumes. While listening to her sister’s soft voice, she kept feeling that one of the exhibition guests at the other side was looking at them.

When she turned to look, Grunt happened to stand up and walk onto the stage.

The title screen of the game was on the big screens at the same time.

Starcraft I was the beginning of esports.

The older generations of video game hotshots all began with Starcraft I, then gradually turned to other games like CS and Warcraft. Unfortunately, she was too young when Starcraft I was popular; by the time she began her professional esports career, Starcraft I had completely

fallen out of favor.

After she had faded out, Starcraft II came out suddenly. In just one short year, it had become the must have event in all the major world esports competitions.

And Solo also just used one year to become the champion again.

“I still remembered that your first competition was at a shabby internet cafe, hot and crowded.” Her sister said unexpectedly, “Nowadays the condition has improved so much. So many competitions and contestants are just like movie stars. There are even exhibitions like the one here and people are walking down the runways. It's so glamorous. This Grunt should be about your age. If you had played Starcraft II, would you be able to surpass him?”

“I'm more suited for playing single events.” Ai Qing watched Grunt as he stood on the stage. “But, there's a video game genius that should be able to. Too bad, ever since he was at that last Asian Tournament with me, he hasn't continued.”

Her sister was very interested. “This is the first time I heard you praise someone other than Solo.”

“He's different than Solo.” Ai Qing said seriously, “Solo makes you feel that he's always sure, always trustworthy. That other person..... I can't imagine what he would be like if he's defeated.”

Including that time, that time he did 200 push-ups continuously. She felt that Dt had thrown in the towel deliberately.

While they were talking, the exhibition games had begun.

Majestic background music, splendorous 3D screens, and a great merciless battlefield. In ten short minutes, her heart beat involuntarily raced up following the rhythm of the match.

Even her sister, a total outsider, was very excited. “How is he? How is he compared to that person you just mentioned?”

“He has a biting personality. He's a purely offensive player. If he's the opponent, I reckon.....it would be very nasty.”

Ai Qing fixed her eyes on the stage.

This was a dangerous player, uncontrollable, very rare.

Suddenly, her sister asked her, “You haven't played any world

competition, only the Asian Tournaments. Are you content with it?”

Were you content with it?

It was like another her asking herself.

She was silent for a few seconds. “I am. Soon I’ll be looking at jewelry and precious stones every day. Don’t hold up my chances of getting rich.”

“Solo, ah, Solo.” Her sister sighed in a low voice. “He is still the top player, but you’ve already retired. Anytime an esports program pops up, you have your eyes glued onto it. Everytime I see you like that, my heart aches. If it wasn’t for two years ago -- --”

“I haven’t seen him for two years, besides, that incident had nothing to do with him.”

Ai Qing continued focusing on the stage and concluded their conversation.



# Chapter 8

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 8

After the exhibition game was over, several reporters circled around Grunt trying to interview him.

There wasn't anything new about their questions, mostly comparing him to Solo.

Solo was a legend in the world of esports; he competed in many events and was superb in all of them. He had become an icon for all these years. But, the guy in front of them didn't seem to have much respect for him.

"Solo is just like a legend, but there's always an end to a legend. Just like so many professional Scandinavian players, many of them were signed onto clubs for huge sums of money but they were all kicked out once their physical strength and energy slowed down." Grunt said in a clear voice with a hint of intrigue. "Usually these players who've played in the top clubs can't stand second rate teams after they leave, and so they would retire in the end."

The three reporters were somewhat stunned and couldn't follow up.

Ai Qing was surprised to hear that. This was the first time she had heard someone with such an opinion.

"Certainly, he is indeed unsurpassable for the first ten years of esports in China. If I were him, I would retire while I'm still on top, before my fall from grace."

Grunt put on his backpack and walked out of the stadium.

"What a sharp tongue." Her sister sighed next to her. "But that arrogance was sort of cute."

She speechlessly looked at her sister.

When the convention ended, no one wanted to be alone and they reserved a room in a KTV(karaoke) to continue partying.

Ai Qing did not know them well so she just sat at a corner watching a bunch of strangers fighting over the microphone. She had become so bored that she was trying to find an excuse to go back to the hotel when several more people came in through the door.

These were the latecomers. The only surprise was that Grunt was among them.

He tilted his head to listen to the girl next to him talking as he walked. He stopped when he saw her sister singing.

“What, you want to meet someone?” The girl next to Grunt asked jokingly.

He frowned and looked at Ai Qing and her sister who was holding the microphone. “I don’t know which one is the one I know.”

The girl laughed and pointed to Ai Jing. “This is the old sister, Ai Jing, the most talented girl of the Chinese Language Department.” She pointed to Ai Qing afterwards. “That is the younger sister, Ai Qing, I heard that she used to be an esports enthusiast just like you.”

Ai Qing nodded politely as an acknowledgment.

“Not just an enthusiast.” Grunt finally fixed his eyes on Ai Qing. “If I remember correctly, she was the sniper on the number one CS team in China six years ago. Three years ago, she was the top player on the second place team of the DotA Chinese Tournament. The same year, she won the first place in Need for Speed at the WCG Asian Tournament.”

“Wow~”

Even before he finished, there were exclamations of awe around the room.

High and low, all forms of admirations and jealousy.

Even though most people there did not play video games, but phrases such as “the number one team”, “sniper”, “second place in China”, and “champion of the Asian Tournament” were being used to describe one person which was shocking enough just hearing it.

# Chapter 9

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 9

Luckily, Grunt did not say anything more afterwards.

He and Ai Qing were the minority in this room, so he naturally sat next to Ai Qing.

He only picked one song to sing during the whole night.

When the music began to play, the whole room suddenly quieted down. Unlike the noisy pop songs they had sang before, it was James Blunt's "You're Beautiful". His voice was deep and low. It was a slower song to begin with, but his singing instantly grabbed everyone's attention when he sang with his deep voice.

When he put down the microphone, Ai Qing's sister excitedly gripped on her hand.

"You sang very well." Ai Qing also exclaimed sincerely. "You like James Blunt?"

"My ex-girlfriend liked Blunt very much." Grunt put the microphone back on the table. His eyes were slightly squinted so one couldn't tell how genuine his words were. "She liked to hear me sing this song, so I just learned it in passing."

Ai Qing did not expect him to talk about something so personal and did not know how to respond.

Luckily, he did not seem to have any desire to continue on the topic either.

It was her sister who pulled on her arm and mouthed: he's not just cute but also a very doting boyfriend.

Ai Qing turned around to look at her sister and also mouthed back: don't

tell me that you've fallen for him?

Her sister's eyes flickered a bit then quickly nodded.

On the way back, they rode on the same taxi since only Grunt and the two sisters were staying in the same hotel. Her sister acted very lady-like all the way. Once they were back in the hotel room, her sister grabbed her arm excitedly. "I really like him, really."

"No wonder you were restless the whole night." She did not know whether to cry or laugh. "You don't even know his real name. Don't you find that a little bit untrustworthy?"

"But my heart raced when I first laid my eyes on him, just like you when you saw Solo for the first time."

.....

In a split second, Ai Qing became silent.

Many, many memories wildly bursted out; she couldn't suppress them in time.

She remembered that the first time she saw Solo was when she was 14 years old. The internet at home was off and she and her sister went to an internet cafe to pass the time. She recalled that she was playing a matching game and suddenly heard a boy talking. His voice was very pleasant to the ear.

She couldn't help herself to take a peek.

Solo was talking to the owner of the internet cafe with one elbow resting on the counter at the front of the cafe. His face was full of smiles, from his eyes to his expressions, just like the bright sunlight in the height of summer.

She felt as if she'd been enchanted and immediately pulled her sister's arm. "Ai Jing, Ai Jing, look at that boy."

Because she was wearing headphones, she forgot to control the volume of her voice. Solo looked over at her even before her sister could turn her head.....

The light in the hallway wasn't turned on.

She looked down to take off her sneakers in the dark then walked into the bathroom barefoot. She turned on the faucet and splashed water onto her face.

The cooling sensation quickly suppressed all the memories.

She pulled down the towel and said, "Men who play video game competitions are no good. The amateurs totally have no future, the professionals are like athletes whose lives only consist of trainings and nothing else. In the end, you'll only suffer. For them, only their teammates are their families, girlfriends and such are all outsiders."

She thought about it more and added. "Besides, in the future when you are introducing your boyfriend, someone would say that their boyfriend is in the banking business or works for the government, what are you going to say? My boyfriend plays video games?"

"I don't mind." her sister leaned against the doorway of the bathroom smiling while biting her lip. All of a sudden she looked at Ai Qing again. "Seriously, have you ever regretted it?"

"I'm not sure. Sometimes I regret it very much. Sometimes I feel that it was a pretty nice thing to be able to solely focus on one thing. But, it is true that esports will mess up your life." She walked out of the bathroom and saw the laptop on the table. "Especially for those people who have reached the peak, it would be very difficult for them to adjust back to an ordinary life."

There was a prompt for a new email on the lower right corner of the screen.

This email box was from the old days which she had subscribed to a large amount of news related to esports. She did not have the heart to

close it.

She opened the mail, for sure, it was news about an international tournament.

“The WCG 2010 qualifying tournament in China has come to an end.

The WCG 2010 qualifying tournament in China has already concluded in 13 locations. The last two locations will be held in Guangzhou and Chengdu this weekend. At the closing moment of the qualifying tournament, the WCG organizers have announced that this year’s final competition in China will be held in July 23 - 25. The location will still be Shanghai.”

The following was a long list of those who had qualified.

While she was reading, her sister came over and pointed at Grunt’s name. “Let’s go see the competition? It happens to be in Guangzhou.”

Ai Qing did not respond.

She might see a lot of familiar faces at a competition like this.

# Chapter 10

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 10

Ai Jing tried to talk her into going, but she refused.

After her sister went to shower in disappointment, she began reading the email very carefully. On the list of players who already qualified, Solo's name was listed for Warcraft III from the Beijing area tournament. Starcraft II was a new competition event after all; it's still an exhibition event at the four major international competitions. Therefore, most of those who competed for Starcraft II were still keeping their old events, so was Solo.

Since he already qualified at Beijing, if there weren't any surprises, he would not come to Guangzhou.

Grunt did not show up for the next two days' game show. He was probably preparing for the preliminary match in Guangzhou and had started his training in advance. The show ended on Thursday. All of a sudden, she felt sorry for her sister when she saw how disappointed her sister was. Finally, when they were packing and getting ready to leave the hotel, she said to her sister, "Considering that you have been taken care of me for so many years, I will go with you to watch the competition."

Ai Jing looked at her in disbelief. "Really? You're not afraid of seeing Solo there?"

Actually, Ai Jing did not mention this matter again for the past few days out of the concern that Ai Qing might be afraid to meet Solo. She did not dare push Ai Qing over the edge, even though she really wanted to go. The reason that Ai Qing gave up esports was to cut herself off from Solo completely so she would not meet him again.



“Really.” Ai Qing reopened her suitcase and put everything back. “He was at the preliminary in Beijing and will not show up in Guangzhou. In addition, there won’t be many familiar faces since a lot of them retired in the past three years.” After saying so, she pointed to Ai Jing’s face confidently. “Besides, with you by my side, it’s perfect for confusing and misleading people.”

They stayed at Guangzhou for one more day due to this decision.

That night, most people had already left and only the two sisters were staying at the hotel with nothing to do. Since everyone had warned them, almost in a sensationalized way, not to go out after dark, they ate instant noodles for dinner.

Her sister asked out of blue while she was eating her noodles, “Do you want to pay a visit to Grunt?”

She almost choked herself to death.

She wiped her tears and her mouth with the napkins passed along by her sister and said, “To visit him as a senpai? We’re not even from the same generation. He even plays with 3D graphics.....”

Women are dreadful.

They are not even human when they are in love.

Her sister narrowed her eyes and made a very disappointed expression with a face that was 90% similar to hers.

She ate for two more minutes in silence. When she raised her head, she saw her sister had maintained the same expression without changing. Finally, she lost her appetite under her sister’s gaze and put down the bowl. “You will wash all the clothes for the rest of the year. You have to pay for a

taxi when I'm late for my internship.....there's one more term, I'll tell you when I come up with it."

Ai Jing nodded solemnly.

.....

She casually put on a short sleeve and a beach shorts. "What excuse do you want me to use to go visit? My sister likes you very much? If you don't mind and don't have a girlfriend, please take her in?"

Her sister almost pulled down her shorts. "You certainly have to say something like you want to play a round against him. Other than this, can you think of any topic that has some association with him?"

"I don't know how to play Starcraft II." She was frank about her weakness. "I had played Starcraft I before, though very badly, not even at par to the amateurs.....you want me to challenge him with this skill level of mine?"

If Grunt's fans ever found out, they could drown her if they each took a turn to spit at her.

# Chapter 11

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 11

Guess what guys? Someone we know is coming back in Chapter 12.

---

Since she already agreed to go, Ai Jing certainly would not let her back out of it.

When Grunt opened the door, she really was holding a laptop. “I want to have a friendly match with you.”

“CS?” Grunt leaned against the door frame. Even though he was answering her question, he was looking at Ai Jing quite unexpectedly.

Seeing his expression, Ai Qing only took a second to understand everything.

She murmured amusingly. “You two are already interested in each other, why do you need me as an excuse?”

Grunt pretended that he didn’t hear. He stepped aside to leave the doorway open. “Come on in.”

When they walked in, they discovered that the room was extremely messy. That huge suitcase they saw at the airport was open, filled with computer accessories.....Ai Qing took a short glance, she could still

recognize some of them and those were all top notch equipments.

On the bed, there were four or five laptops strewn around.

It looked like this top player was not just a top player, he was also a zealot.

In addition, there's more than one person in the room.

A bookish boy with very short hair stood up, he took a look at Ai Qing, then took another look at Ai Jing. "Grunt, you actually know Apple Dog....." He was holding a biology book and stared at the two with great interest. "I couldn't tell who's who since I only saw Gou Gou in videos. Could you self-introduced yourselves?"

"I am." Ai Qing said.

"I have heard so much about you." The boy finally put down the book and solemnly offered his hand. "I am a Starcraft II player, too. 97." Ai Qing didn't expect him to be so serious, shook his hand lightly, and asked curiously, "Your name.....is it for celebrating the return of Hong Kong?"

97 laughed, showing off the two deep dimples on his face, which were quite cute. "Yeah, I started doing esports at the tenth anniversary of the return of Hong Kong. I remember you won the racing championship at that year's Asian Tournament."

"It's been so long." Ai Qing felt that this person in front of her should be of the same age as her. But somehow she had a feeling of having gone through the vicissitudes of life.

"Why don't you continue? I thought you'd turn into professional, but didn't hear anything in the end."

Ai Qing didn't answer the question directly; after saying something

irrelevant, she put her computer on the desk in the living room area.

“I don’t have CS on my computer.” Grunt took one computer from the bed. “I’ll use my friend’s to play with you.”

97 looked at Grunt amazedly. “You’ll lose for sure playing against Apple Dog.”

She felt quite uneasy when she heard that since she wasn’t seriously coming here to play a match. She turned on the computer and said, “I only played CS once in these two years. My skill has downgraded a lot.”

97 was relieved. “Then maybe he’ll have some chance.....”

.....

Ai Qing had never seen such a unsupportive friend and glanced at Grunt sympathetically.

He basically wasn’t paying any attention to 97 and put his laptop on the desk. With one hand besides the computer, the other hand started to pick out the space key. “Don’t need the jumping key.” He then picked out the 1, 2, 3, 4, and R keys. “We can’t switch guns half way and no smoke and flash bombs. How’s that?”

When he spoke, the corners of his mouth always curved up beautifully.

He’s showing off.

“Ok.” Ai Qing was intrigued with this way of doing matches. She also picked out those keys and even took out the S key too. “We don’t need the back key either.”

# Chapter 12

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 12

Guess who's back, back again.

---

It's still the old rule, two out of three rounds.

Since there were limits on the movement keys, they couldn't jump or move back. This was a match focused solely on offense. The two could only use their ears to determine the location of the opponent. If one showed his/her face, the round would be finished.

97 pretentiously opened a can of coke, but the whole match was over just after he had taken a few sips.

Two wins out of three, she won two rounds.

It's a pity though, due to her old habits, she subconsciously touched the back key even though the key was not there. "I had a violation, so do you want to do one more round?"

"No need. It's not a shame I lost to you." Grunt stood up and picked up an apple from the table, using his own pocket knife to peel it.

A thin layer of peel quickly fell down and he cut it into several pieces.

He picked one up with a toothpick and handed directly to Ai Jing.

Ai Jing was somewhat stunned and at a loss, which was rare for her.

But that was just for a short instance, she soon recovered and took the piece over. “Thanks.”

Grunt grinned and put the other pieces onto a plate and push it towards her and 97. He used his fingers to pick up one for himself.

The four of them had just met, so naturally there weren't many topics they could talk about. Luckily, there's still esports that they could talk about. Ai Jing had followed her career for so many years, so she could also join in the conversation with Grunt and 97. After they chatted for a while, she looked at all the computers on the bed and asked curiously, “Why are the two of you using so many computers?”

“There's one more person.” 97 beamed and pointed to the computer that Grunt was using just then and said, “This computer is his.”

He was going to say something more, but was interrupted as the door opened from outside.

A man walked in with one hand holding the card key and the other hand carrying a huge plastic bag. When she raised her head, he happened to look over at the people inside the room. His eyes under the cap fixed on Ai Qing without any hesitation; he could easily distinguish the twins.

He had grown at least 20 some centimeters taller. The contour of his face hadn't changed much. It was like it had been outlined by a single light stroke, without any extra line and without any expression.

“Here, this is the other guy. Your sister should know him. He's Dt, the captain of the DotA championship team of that year's WCG Asian Tournament.” 97 greeted Dt with a high five. “I've almost died of thirst.

Give me a drink first.”

Dt came over and put the whole bag of cold drinks on the bed.

97 quickly opened the plastic bag and took out what he wanted to drink, Grunt was still eating his apple.

She felt that the whole situation was so inconceivable that she just watched Dt. Slowly her lips parted into a smile.

As she was about to say something, Dt had already knelt down in front of her with slightly tightened lips serving as a smile.

“I’m back.”



# Chapter 13

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 13

He looked at her with one hand resting on the edge of the bed.

Ai Qing thought he was going to say something, but after a while, he hadn't said a word.

Suddenly it was just like that night in Singapore.

She had to rack her brain to come up with topics to chat with him and this young boy was always a person with few words.

Ai Qing also took out two bottles of green tea from the plastic bag and handed one to him. "Welcome back. Where have you been all this time? Why haven't you continued to compete?"

He took the bottle and twisted the cap off to take a sip, but there was no answer.

She took a look at the laptop on the desk. Actually, she should have recognized it before; it was obviously the same one he used in Singapore. "You are here for the WCG China Preliminary? Which event?"

"Warcraft." he put down the bottle.

She looked at him astonished.

This time, Starcraft was just an exhibition event since it hadn't been officially listed as a competition event. Therefore, all Starcraft players were doing their original events. She didn't know which event Grunt was going to participate. But on the preliminary list of Beijing, Solo had qualified

for the Starcraft event.

In other words, if he wanted to be the world champion.

The first thing he had to do was to beat Solo.

Dt stood up, walked over to the desk, and began to put the keys back onto the keyboard one by one. With very clean fingers, he picked up the black keyboard and pushed the key back down with a click, and then moved onto the next one. He was treating everyone in the room like air.

“You do know each other.”

97 started laughing.

Certainly, no one was paying attention to him.

After the sisters were back in their own room, her sister then asked, “Was that guy there the esports genius you mentioned before?”

“En. Wu Bai, Dt.”

“Ah! I remember that name, Wu Bai. He’s the one that Solo kept talking to you about?”

“Solo had been very interested in recruiting him to join his club.” Ai Qing said, “but he disappeared all of a sudden afterwards. Since his appearance was very short-lived, I figured a lot of people had already forgotten about him.”

He was now just 18 years old.

In other words, he was at the prime time of his life.

“When he said he’s going to play Warcraft, how come I feel that there’s

something wrong with you.” Her sister never cared about esports, but this time she kept asking questions. It seemed that she wanted to learn all about it in these few days. “What’s so special about this game? I remember Solo was always playing this event?”

“Warcraft has always been China’s strongest event.” Ai Qing came up with a more suitable way to explain to a layman like her sister. “Just like Ping Pong is China’s best sporting event. It’s very likely that a provincial athlete will be better than another country’s national athlete. Once you pick an event like that, you have to face many strong opponents domestically. He was not playing this event before.....but I watched him play Warcraft before, very strong.” She recalled the scene at that time. “Extremely strong.”

“What a true legend.” Her sister sighed lengthily. “I always feel that is what youth should be about, with all the international competitions, tours, world championships.....”

She was somewhat preoccupied and turned on the computer to search again for news about this year’s competitions on Baidu. She specially searched for this year’s rules. There was going to be three slots from the China Preliminary.

Warcraft had three million players in China and over thirty thousand professional and semi professional players. It was the well-deserved number one game in China. If a black horse qualified.....it would definitely be sensational news.

# Chapter 14

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 14

When Ai Qing and her sister arrived at the stadium, they were assaulted by a multitude of ad banners.

Her sister had never watched an official competition. She suddenly sighed after seeing all the men and women esports fans, holding little flags, animatedly talking with each other, “I finally understand why you fell for Solo before. They’re just like movie stars, with millions of crazy fans.....and they’re all so tech savvy.”

This was the first time she had come to watch a competition as a spectator since she retired.

She was also shocked by the size of the crowd.

It just so happened that today’s event was Warcraft, so indeed they have arrived for the most popular event.

Nowadays in all the international competitions, the seed players from China and Korea basically represented the highest level in the world. Therefore, the preliminary match in China benefitted all esports fans. Who wasn’t overjoyed to watch a world level competition right in front of one’s door? Fortunately, 97 gave them two tickets when he heard that they were planning to watch the game.....

The two weaved their way through the crowd. Before they reached the gate, there were several esports players walking by. Fans enthusiastically greeted them as they came by.

She turned to size them up, they were all unfamiliar faces.

No wonder people said that the country had been very prosperous in the last two years. In the past, this kind of treatment were reserved only for the few top players.

“97! 97!”

Soon there were several young girls shouted.

Ai Qing finally heard a name she knew. She tilted her head and saw 97's baby face with a full smile. Hum. A 178 cm tall big boy with a baby face.....he seemed to have heard his name and turn around politely, and saw the twin sisters right away. “You here? Let's go in together.”

After he finished speaking, there were immediate outburst of envy and jealousy.

Ai Qing was amused and grabbed her sister to walk over to the gate. 97 went in first after showing his name tag. When Ai Qing also came up to him, he was like he had just remembered something. “Have you seen Dt and Grunt?”

“No, we just got here too.” she shook her head and followed him into the lobby. “Aren't you staying in the same room with them?”

“Not the same room.” 97 made a helpless face. “I got up late and went to knock on their door, but there's no response. I assumed they are here already.”

97 made a gesture for “gone” with two fingers after saying and walked into the backstage.

Her sister was listening attentively. After he had left, she inquired further, “Will they be late? If you run into a traffic jam for a competition like this, what do you do?”

“What can you do.” Ai Qing took up the tickets and looked for the numbers of the seats. “If a sprinter was late for the match, would you let all the others wait on the track? Certainly, he'll be disqualified.”

They came in a little late as most people were already seated.

When they finally located their seats, the sponsor was already making a speech on stage. Introductions for all the players followed. Ai Qing glanced over the big screen, and, to her surprise, found out that Grunt, 97, and Dt were all playing Warcraft..... “What an infight.” She sighed lightly. “Even if they are qualified at Guangzhou, they will still have to fight to the end at the national final.”

“What are you saying?” Her sister was still searching for Grunt in the players section.

“What I’m saying is that your Grunt and his two good friends are all in the same event.”

Her sister responded with an ‘Oh’.

She didn’t react. She seemed to be having an internal debate and then said, “So, who do you think will win?” Ai Qing looked at the grouping chart. “It’s hard to say. I only saw Dt play a match before, and that was not in a real competition.”

“Not in a competition? What match was that?”

“It was Solo who gathered some world top ranking players to play a scrimmage with him once.”

Her sister said another ‘Oh’, and thought for a while with frowned eyebrows.

“Can I pray that Dt has a bad case of diarrhea? That sounds very mean.”

.....

“Whatever.”

# Chapter 15

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 15

One could tell how famous a player was on the field of competition.

One indicator was the number of fans. The other indicator was the introductions given by the commentators. From the beginning of the competition, the two commentators on stage, in order to excite the audience, kept chattering about the participating players.

“In the past two years, Grunt has been closely gaining on Solo. Frankly these two players have quite a lot in common.” One of the commentators spoke with a more teasing tone. “For example, they’ve both doubled up on Warcraft III and Starcraft II. From talent to performance, they both are the best players in the country.”

Double up.....such a nice phrase.

“The Warcraft rankings in the past few years have been quite stable in competitions in both China and internationally. Can’t say if there will be any surprises this time.” The other commentator was obviously trying to raise another topic.

“There certainly will be, especially at this stop at Guangzhou.”

“Tell us about it?”

“Let’s not spoil the suspense just yet. I bet he’ll be the one to give Grunt quite the headache this round.”

The two looked at each other and laughed after they finished talking.

The audience, also esports fans, immediately exploded into cheers.

The elimination rounds were going on for all the players.

Nearly a hundred players were chosen from the pre-selection process. This morning was the elimination round which would determine the sixteen top players. The championship round would be in the afternoon. Naturally, there was no live broadcast of the initial pre-selection and the elimination rounds on the big screen. Everyone was just overlooking the competition area and kept their attention on the list of winners that were being constantly posted on the big screen.

After half an hour, the list was quickly refreshing.

Ai Qing stared at the new list, Dt's name showed up quickly and after a few minutes she saw 97.

However, Grunt's name never showed up on the list.

Clamours of comments could be heard surrounding them.

Soon the commentator received a note. He glanced over it and seemed somewhat helpless. "Grunt is missing from the competition. I never thought that we wouldn't see him again in Guangzhou." The other commentator smiled somewhat unnaturally. "It can't be that he gave up the competition again?"

Ai Qing couldn't understand the meaning of "gave up competition again", her sister also looked at her nervously. "Why again?"

She shook her head. "Don't know."

As the two were wondering, the boy sat behind them kindly came closer and said, "Last year, at the ESWC Chinese final, Grunt forfeited on the spot after protesting about the lack of order in the arena."

Ai Qing was surprised to hear that.

What an arrogant person. It really was.....rare to see someone like that.

When the list stopped refreshing, the sixteen finalists were shown on the big screen.



The organizer purposely asked the commentators to introduce the sixteen finalists, probably because they were afraid some of the audience would leave early since Grunt was absent. Because this was only the final round of one of the stops, about half of the sixteen were not very well known. The commentators only briefly mentioned many names, but they stopped when it was 97's turn. "Among the esports players I know, 97 is the one who is doing the best in school and who has the highest ratio of female fans. Do you know why?"

"Why?"

"At one of the interviews, he was asked why he started playing esports. He surprisingly said bashfully in front of the camera that it's because he can't find girlfriend. He discovered that esports players are very popular among girls, so he decided to join."

97's fans in the audience burst out in laughter. They were, for sure, all young girls.

The commentators teased some more. Then, they finally used the laser pen to circle Dt's name.

"We were hoping to see this person and Grunt fight against each other. Too bad Grunt was absent again." The commentators switched the screen to show a picture from a computer folder. It turned out to be the group photo of the Chinese Team at the 2007 WCG Asian Tournament. "This is the group photo of the WCG Asian Tournament in Singapore of 07. This is the first time the Chinese team won the group championship."

In the picture, a whole row of people, with dazzlingly smiles, held an oversized reward check.

Ai Qing was entranced for a short moment. On that picture, Slide was on her left and Dt on the right. That should be the most glorious moment for her and Slide.

The audience gradually quieted down.

The other commentator laughed. "There were many famous teams that

year.” His laser pen pointed to the big screen and circled the girl in the picture. “This girl used to be very famous. I was kicked out the final by this girl at the Chinese final in the DotA event that year.”

Her sister excitedly grabbed her arm and said in a low voice, “I really want to throw you onto the stage. This commentator obviously is your fan. Ah.....” Ai Qing’s face turned red quickly, her famous big red face.

“Gou Gou.” The one who had dugged up the photo jokingly said, “Too bad, she was Solo’s girlfriend when she started her career. Absolutely the kind that you can only watch from distance.”

With a gossip liked this, the quiet audience was immediately turned alive.

Ai Qing felt that her arm was going to swell up in her sister’s hand.....

“Ok, back to serious business.”

The commentator deliberately stopped to take a sip of water.

“Dt was the captain of the ‘07 DotA championship team. He was only 15 years old at the time. He’s been nicknamed “God’s left hand” by the whole DotA circle just because of his debilitating gank technique. After that competition, Dt disappeared for three years. In these three years, he has not participated in any competitions or any esports platforms. But it is this year, here in Guangzhou, at this stadium, he’s come back.”

# Chapter 16

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 16

He wasn't just back.

The commentator hadn't told the whole story.

Nowadays, esports was basically dominated by a few seeded players. Yet, this person who had disappeared for three years chose the most competitive event, Warcraft, to come back into the arena.

For just this one reason, it had made this year's WCG China preliminary full of uncertainties.

Amidst the heated discussions around her, she looked over to the competitors resting area.

Dt was very easy to pick out. He had his arms folded in front of his chest, his head quietly bowed down, and didn't seem to pay any attention to the commentators.....just like he had fallen asleep.

Actually, he was really asleep.

A staff, holding a stack of lunch boxes and disposable chopsticks, walked near him. Seeing that there was no response from him, the staff had to bend over to call him. He woke up quickly, pushed his cap up, and took one of the white lunch boxes.

"Ai Qing, I'm hungry. How about we go get something to eat?"

Her sister was asking next to her.

"Let's go." She stood up and looked over at Dt again. He had already opened the box, pulled apart the chopsticks, and started eating.

It seemed this was what this profession was all about. Even though you received various awards on flashy podiums and was interviewed by various media groups, in the end you had to endure the reality of the profession. You had to participate in club sponsored activities and go everywhere for commercial promotions. Compared to what a player had to invest, the economical return was quite pitiful.

For Warcraft alone, there were over thirty thousand professional players.

Only a few of them who were truly well-off and steadily earned more than ten thousands RMB a month.

There were a lot of food stands outside of the stadium.

The two hastily ate some food, then her sister told her that she wanted to go back to the hotel.

“Are you going back for that somebody?” Ai Qing knew her sister’s reasons. “I feel that he’s not a very reliable person.”

She usually didn’t have good impressions for people who were too arrogant.

Even though Grunt did have the right to be arrogant.

Her sister smilingly put arms around her neck and rubbed against her face. “I know what’s proper or not.”

Proper..... did it really exist?

She watched her sister run to the curb and waved down a taxi. Then she suddenly realized that she had come here to watch the game with her sister in the first place. Now that her sister had left, what was she doing here still?

She sorrowfully raised her head to see the gate to the stadium. Did she want to give up watching halfway?

In the end, she bought a bottle of mineral water and walked back to the spectators’ area. Those two commentators were surrounded by a group of

fans taking pictures. The one who claimed to have been defeated by her happened to see her face. There was a big look of surprise on his face. Ai Qing politely smiled and walked towards the seats.

The person ran over after she had only walked over two steps.

“Gou Gou?”

She turned her head.

The commentator excitedly reached out his right hand. “Do you remember me? 2007 the final of the WCG Asian Tournament China preliminary?” Ai Qing shook his hand. “The captain of TM team. Fourth place in the country for the 2007 WCG Asian Tournament?”

“It’s me.” The person, with irrepressible excitement, acted as if he had met an old friend. “Come to watch the game today?”

Ai Qing replied with an `en`. “To watch some friends compete.”

“Dt?”

“You could say that.”

In any case, they had fought side by side before.

# Chapter 17

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 17

“Do you have any plan to continue competing? Nowadays, a lot of tournaments have awards for female teams.”

“No plan.” Ai Qing shook her head. “Didn’t you retire too?”

“Yeah,” the commentator sighed. “I officially retired last year. I work at a bank now. All my free time is devoted to doing commentary for various competitions. Sometimes, for specially good competitions, I’m always sure to be there even if I have to pay for the trip out of my own pocket. My esports dream, I figure I won’t wake up from it all my life.”

“I have always felt sorry for all of you.” The commentator was becoming rather emotional. “Everyone of you looked like you had such bright futures, but then you all disappeared.”

“Luckily, Dt is back.” She looked over to the contestants area not too far from where they stood and discovered that Dt was walking towards her.

“Yeah.” The commentator also turned around to take a look. “We have too few world champions. If we can have more world champions and more gold medals, then esports will be definitely become more mainstream.”

Dt was taking his time to walk over and stopped right next to them.

The commentator delightedly patted his shoulder. “After news about today’s Guangzhou competition is out, all the predictions on major forums will absolutely have an upheaval. Without Grunt, you’ll definitely be the champion here. After you get signed up with a club, you’ll be a pro. Keep it up.”

“Thanks.”

His answer was very simple and the eyes under the rim of his cap were placid.

Ai Qing was afraid that the commentator had felt embarrassed, she cleared her throat and half jokingly said, “Dt always acts cool. After we won the championship in Singapore, a bunch of the media tried to interview him and asked many questions. They asked him what he thought about the sponsors, how he felt about the competition, how he thought about his opponents, all he answered was two words --- ---” She imitated the way he talked and lowered her voice. “Not bad.”

Even Dt curved up the sides of his mouth after hearing what she said.

“Gotcha, gotcha. I’ve met people who talk even less.” The commentator laughed. “I have to go for the raffle. You guys talk. I have to go back on stage.”

He turned around and ran up to the stage afterwards.

People were continuously coming back from lunch. When they passed by the two, they all looked at Dt with surprise. It’s hard to be as calm as he was, without giving even the tiniest reaction to the attention.

Ai Qing tilted her head, trying to look at his eyes from under rim of his cap. “How do you feel about this morning?”

“Not bad.”

He answered without thinking.

The two looked at each other for 3 seconds, Ai Qing was the one who first bursted out laughing.

Dt tilted his head, and waited with some embarrassment for her to stop laughing. Then he casually looked over at the stage and asked her a not so

important question. “Have you eaten?”

“I just ate. Ate a lot of snacks outside the stadium. Guangzhou’s snacks are really good.” She sounded like she hadn’t had enough.

“Are you full?”

“I thought I was full. But for snacks, you feel you’re full at the time but later on you find out that you’re actually still hungry.” Ai Qing remembered that pitiful lunch box he just had and also asked, “Are you full? The sponsors are so stingy, they just gave you guys boxed lunches.”

He didn’t really care. “It’s alright.”

Music began to gradually quiet down signaling that it was almost time for the afternoon competition.

She pouted her lips to remind him. “It’s starting.”

It’s the final rounds for the last 16 players in the afternoon.

Two matches were going on at the same time. They were broadcasted live on two large screens.

Due to commercial sponsorship, two commentators were continuously doing quiz shows on esports facts during intervals between the game rounds. The questions were most related to computer hardware and the awards naturally were famous players’ autographed pictures.

The little boy behind Ai Qing got the chance to answer two consecutive questions, but failed to come up with the correct answers. He was punching the chair dejectedly. She felt this boy was very interesting and since he had very nicely told her about Grunt in the morning, she turned around and said, “Next one you try to get picked to answer, I will tell you the answer.”

“Really?” The little boy looked at her surprisingly.

Ai Qing winked. “Yes, believe me. These questions are all piece of cake



for me.”

The little boy hurriedly took out a notebook from his backpack and passed a pen to her. “Can you give me your autograph? Though I don’t know who you are, but I’m sure you are awesome.”

.....

This was the first time Ai Qing signed an autograph under this kind of circumstance.....

Considering that he was only 12 or 13 years old, there was nothing to be angry about.

She awkwardly took over the pen, quickly signed and returned it to him.

# Chapter 18

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 18

“The following question is very basic, a give-away question --- ---”  
Halfway through the commentator’s words, the little boy behind Ai Qing had already stood with his hand raised high above his head.

“Eh?” The commentator started laughing. “This boy had gotten two chances to answer, but wrong both times. Do you want an autograph that badly?” The young boy was so excited that his face was flushed. “I want Solo’s!”

.....

Ai Qing suddenly wanted to dig a hole to bury herself.

But she had already made a promise, she had to carry it out.

“For this award, the questions will be the toughest I can think of.” The commentator bowed his head and began to ask five consecutive questions. “Usually in a competition, what kind of keyboard do most contestants favor?”

She said in a low voice. “Mechanical keyboard.”

The boy repeated.

“What is a mechanical keyboard? Briefly explain it?”

She continued to answer for him without even thinking. “Every key in a mechanical keyboard is composed of spring, stand, and circuit switch. Every key has its own mechanical switch. It’s the most popular type of keyboard in the early days and a game enthusiast’s first choice.”

The boy continued to repeat the answer. There were already people beginning to marvel at his answers.

“But there are exceptions. There was a professional player who used just a normal membrane keyboard to beat a world ranked.....”

“Solo!”

The boy didn't wait for Ai Qing to tell him and answered the question full of confidence.

It's a wild guess from him, made entirely from his hero worshipping.....

The commentator couldn't help but laugh. “Alright, last two questions. What year was that match? Who's the opponent?”

This was absolutely set up as a difficult question.

They probably figured that no one except Solo himself could be sure.....because it wasn't an official match.

She hesitated, then said, “2008, it was a private battle to settle some personal grievance. The opponent was Korea's King of Animals, Nani.”

The boy was quite amazed, opened his mouth, but he then quickly repeated it again.

It was silent for a while inside the stadium, followed by loud applause. They were all admiring this young boy who knew so much about esports history and legends. That commentator was quite surprised, too. The person next to him, who knew Ai Qing, smiled and whispered to him, the commentator who was holding the mic finally understood. He laughingly asked the boy, “Do you know who's that long haired Jie Jie<sup>[1]</sup> sitting in front of you?”

Everyone in the stadium looked towards her after hearing him speak.

Very quickly, some people found out what had happened. Some were surprised, others curious, there were all kinds of emotions.

Some people already raised their cell phones towards her direction trying to take pictures. Ai Qing could only bow her head low, looked at the flyer about the competition in her hand, and tried very hard not to show her face.

She regretted not listening to Ai Jing.....

While she was anguishing over the situation,

The boy thought hard for a while, then said, "I don't know."

The audience exploded into laughter, all felt that this boy was too cute.

The commentator wouldn't let up on the subject and continued leading the boy. "At the conclusion of this morning's competition, we mentioned 16 of the strongest players. Were you listening carefully then?"

The boy was embarrassed and grinned. "I was so hungry at that time and went out to eat....."

The other commentator who knew Ai Qing thought that it was enough and pulled the commentator's arm.

The commentator finally gave up making fun of Ai Qing. "The award this time isn't just Solo's autograph, there's also Solo's favorite keyboard and mouse. Congratulations." After that, he deliberately added, "You have very good luck."

The boy was extremely surprised and kept thanking the commentator.

After he sat back down, he couldn't help himself but to lean on the back of the seat to ask Ai Qing in a low voice, "Jie jie, are you really that

awesome?”

“.....nah, he’s having fun with you.”

She continued to stare at that thin piece of paper until all the questions were answered one after another. She raised her head when the competition finally started again and concentrated on the elimination rounds on the big screen.

Just like the commentator had previously predicted, the result of competition was full of surprise but yet without any suspense.

97 was third place, Dt was the biggest black horse, winning first place at the Guangzhou stop.

When the winning three stood on the podium, Dt’s quietness almost became another focal point of everyone’s attention. The commentators also discovered the interesting situation and began to ask him all kinds of questions. Dt, with both of his hands behind his back, just nodded or shook his head.

“How do you feel about your own performance this time?”

“Not.....”Dt abruptly stopped, then spoke after thinking for a while. “It’s alright.”

Ai Qing watched him from the audience. She couldn’t help but make a funny face when he raised his head. She left the stadium before the audience began to depart. It was almost dark outside when she walked out the gate.

This time of the day was rush hour. She waited for a full ten minutes at the curb and couldn’t get hail a single taxi.

“It’s not easy to get a taxi this time of the day.” Dt, who supposedly should still be doing interviews, suddenly appeared behind her. He had his black backpack on and lowered his head to look at her. “Let’s walk back

together?”

[1]: Jie Jie is pinyin for 姐姐, which means literally older sister. Normally used for both blood related older sister or as a term to address a female older than you.

# Chapter 19

## God's Left Hand - Book 1: Chapter 19

“You know Guangzhou well?” She knew roughly which direction to go at best. If he let her walk back on her own, she would definitely become lost.

“I used to live here for a while.”

She responded with an ‘oh’. She remembered that he had mentioned that he had watched her competition in Guangzhou six years ago.

Dt seemed to know the way very well, leading Ai Qing with a steady pace. Since he was much taller than Ai Qing, he had deliberately slowed down somewhat so that she wouldn’t become too tired trying to keep up.

Ai Qing was not dumb and certainly clear about his intentions.

That’s the difference between a boy and a girl. Three years ago in Singapore, he was only taller than Ai Qing by about 10cm. But now at the age of 18 or 19, he had already become a full grown adult.

Along the road, the audience and esport fans came out of the stadium and soon they recognized Dt and her. Many students who were riding bikes kept turning their heads to look at them and began to exchange words with each other.

He wore his cap low, easily able to ignore their prying eyes.

But she was embarrassed and tried to come up with a topic to talk about. She simply didn’t know where to begin since she really didn’t know him that well.....

“What is a ‘grievance round’?” He asked suddenly.

“It’s a way among esport contestants to settle personal scores.” She said. “Be it professional or amature, there will always be some conflicts

during internet battles or competitions. Some conflicts started from minor issues, but fans get too involved and escalate the situation into something unmanageable. In the end, just like in the old days one settled a feud with a duel, there will be matches to settle the conflict.”

“Then what was it about, that time for Solo?”

He looked at her.

“Uhm.....” Ai Qing recalled. “That was because one time at an offline match, Nani cursed when he lost the game. Then it started from people talking on a forum and escalated into a very serious issue.....Nani didn’t apologize only saying that he had misspoke. He even said it was because the Chinese didn’t keep the place in an orderly fashion and caused him to misfire.”

“Then?”

“Then, it escalated into a melee between the two countries. Solo was worried that the situation was getting out of hand, so he decided to have a private ‘grievance round’ on Battle.net. He used a membrane keyboard against a mechanical keyboard to prove that Nani hadn’t misfired but was simply not good enough.” Ai Qing laughed. “The agreed punishment was that the one who lost had to sing a song on YY and give the title of “Battle.net’s number 1” to the other side. Because they were all professional players, it’s not nice to embarrass the loser too much, so the winner had to answer a question. He had to answer any question except financial information like bank accounts.”

People who loved esports are all childish in some way. They don’t put too much emphasis on what is good and what is evil. So even the punishment of this grievance round which was to settle a serious issue was hilarious.

“Solo won?”



Ai Qing replied with an, 'en'. "Barely, he used a membrane keyboard after all."

"What question did he have to answer?"

What question did he answer?

That day, it was like everyone who was watching had made a pact. They all agreed on one question without any dispute: aside from your daughter and mother, who's the woman you love most?

There were over ten thousand people online at the time and they flooded the screen continuously.

The one who was hosting the event almost couldn't control the scene and just started following the crowd with their teasing, was it the name of certain animal, or was it the one who turned red when laughing?

.....

Ai Qing stared at the traffic lights and said, "I forgot." Then she felt she wasn't being polite so she turned the table to him. "You know him well when we were in Singapore. You can go ask him."